

# Rancho Viejo Montessori School

For Infant, Toddler, Preschool, and Elementary  
Students  
2024 - 2025

## Introduction

- Mission Statement
- History
- Outcomes
- Admissions

## Student Health

- When your child is ill
- When your child becomes ill at school
- Injuries
- Medication

## Programs

- Infant House - see attachment
- Toddler House
- Children's House
- Elementary
- Extended Day Clubs
- Studios
- School of the Arts

## Parents and the School

- Community of trust, friendship and respect
- Volunteering the gift of time and talent
- Communication between home and school
- Faculty Meetings & staff development

## Procedures

- Hours
- Parking
- Arrival
- Dismissal
- Attendance

## Academic Policies

- Portfolios
- Homework
- Academic honesty
- Academic testing
- Family conferences
- Promotion from one level to the next
- Transcripts
- Privacy of student files

## Everyday Life

- First days
- Uniform Policy
- What students need
- Textbooks
- Plants
- Lost & found
- Rest time
- Special items
- Celebrations
- Birthday
- Lunch
- Snack
- Helper of the day
- Outdoors
- Field trips

## Rules and Regulations

- Fundamental ground rules
- Drugs and alcohol
- Violence and harassment
- Smoking
- Cell phones
- Respect for property of others
- Care of the environment
- Rules for safety in school vehicles
- Disaster preparedness

## Financial Policies

- Tuition policies
- Re-enrollment
- Financial Assistance

## INTRODUCTION

### Mission Statement

Nurturing and inspiring curious, creative, and gifted minds.

### History

Rancho Viejo is an independent Montessori school located in Rancho Santa Margarita. Founded in 1996, it serves 100 students, 6 weeks through Elementary. Montessori education attends to the development of the whole child - intellectual, social, emotional, physical and spiritual.

Rancho Viejo School is dedicated to its Montessori philosophy, which embraces interactive and self-directed learning, academic excellence, respect and appreciation for the environment, and the celebration of all peoples and cultures.

At Rancho Viejo, we have a commitment to a close partnership between home and school with a program where children are treated with respect, structure is inherent, and the learning possibilities are endless. We welcome children without regard to race, color, national or ethnic origin or religion.

### Outcomes of a Montessori Education

Studies comparing children attending Montessori schools with those enrolled in conventional programs show the following educational outcomes:

- **Intrinsic Motivation:** Montessori students have the innate desire to engage in an activity for enjoyment and satisfaction.
- **Ability to Handle External Authority:** The Montessori student is able to accept the ground rules established by external authority as appropriate boundaries in his or her interactions within the school community.

- **Creativity and Originality of Thought:** Montessori students are confident using the knowledge and skills they have acquired to express their own ideas and creativity. They recognize the value of their own ideas, respect the creative process of others and are willing to share regardless of risk.
- **Social Responsibility:** The Montessori student has the awareness that one's actions impact the welfare of the group and that one cannot attain complete independence and autonomy until one contributes constructively in a group process.
- **Academic Preparation:** Montessori students are provided with the skills that allow them to become independently functioning adults and life-long learners. As students master one level of academic skills, they can go further and apply themselves to increasingly challenging materials across various academic disciplines. Academic skills are essential to learning and knowing, not the aim of learning and knowing.
- **Autonomy:** The Montessori student is self directed, composed and morally independent.
- **Confidence and Competence:** The Montessori student is a competent child who perceives himself as being successful, has a realistic understanding of accomplishment and can learn from his mistakes. Competence is the capability for success through taking risks, reflection and self-correction.
- **Spiritual Awareness:** Montessori students are compassionate, empathetic, and sensitive to the natural world and the human condition.

### Admissions

Children 6 weeks to 12 years of age may be considered for admission. Following the initial tour of the facility, the Head of School meets with the student candidate and visits with the parents. Admission priorities are in accordance with the following school policy:

- Currently enrolled students
- Siblings of currently enrolled students

- Montessori transfer students
- Balance of age and gender in the classroom

Because a complete Montessori education is built on a series of three-year cycles, admission to our elementary program without prior Montessori experience is considered only after careful discussion with parents. Also, applicants are required to spend an academic day with us. All admissions are provisional for new students. The first six-week period is one of observation and adjustment for the students and the faculty.

If for any reason during this time it is apparent that a Montessori placement is not appropriate for a newly admitted child, the Head of School will contact the family to consider an extended transition period with specific goals or to examine alternative placement possibilities.

## **PROGRAMS**

### Beginners

Dr. Maria Montessori, who developed the system of education that bears her name, knew that during the period from birth to age 3, your child's brain develops more rapidly than at any other time, and more learning takes place than at any other stage of development. Yet many parents don't seek out formal education until their children have passed the toddler age.

Recognizing the importance of these formative years, the Montessori approach to infants and toddlers supports starting earlier than that.

In our Montessori environment, your infant or toddler will be with teachers - loving, nurturing, and rigorously trained in child development - who create peaceful, supportive, and safe environments for our youngest children. In these spaces, a child's natural passion for wonder, curiosity, exploration, independence and discovery come alive.

### Infant House

Our Infant House accommodates non-mobile or crawling infants in a peaceful classroom environment. Here, the infant safely explores, feeling secure in the presence of loving adult caregivers. The environment includes developmentally appropriate furniture and materials that support your child's budding independence, including bars for pulling up, mirrors to reflect body movement, and a sleeping area with individual floor beds / cribs and child sized tables and chairs rather than highchairs.

### Toddler House

Our Toddler House safely supports your child's drive to do things by themselves, developing confidence and a sense of competence. This classroom has large practical life and sensorial areas that provide an opportunity to experiment and explore. Teachers help the young child adapt to a community environment by providing a warm and secure place for toddlers to learn.

The combination of loving attention and quality care in our prepared environment encourages the natural rhythm of learning and development. Children take their first steps toward discovering the joy in learning by developing independence, order and routine, sensory awareness, and language skills.

### Children's House

Our Children's House is for children ages 3 to 6. These years nurture the growth of children's independence, self-discipline and self-esteem while introducing them to the basics of academics.

The prepared environment encourages increased independence and active participation in the learning process. Montessori manipulative materials enable students to progress at their own pace. Each child's unique personality is encouraged, and each child is respected as an important member of the classroom. Children

receive individualized and group instruction in an atmosphere of cooperation.

### Elementary

The Lower Elementary anticipates that the students have acquired basic language, reading, writing, mathematical, and cultural skills in the Children's House. With this experience, they are ready to explore the world at large. Lower Elementary classes continue to bring children of different age levels (6-9) together, allowing children to progress at their own pace.

Students explore the realms of mathematics, science, technology, economics, anthropology, civics and the basic organization of human societies. Their studies cover memorization of math facts, spelling lessons, and the study of vocabulary, grammar, sentence analysis, creative and expository writing, and library research.

The Upper Elementary students are concerned with the workings of society. To meet these needs, the 9 to 12 curriculum is based on history, geography, and science - what Dr. Montessori grouped as cultural subjects.

Each student works individually to master language skills and mathematics while studying the cultural areas as a group. This structure facilitates both independent study and group work in a self-paced, cooperative program. During the school week, Elementary students have concentrated work periods in Art, Spanish, Music and Physical Exercise.

### Extended Day clubs

The Sunrise Club is available before school from 7:00 to 8:00 AM. The Sunset Club is available after school until 6:00 PM. All students must be picked up before 6:00 PM when the Sunset Club closes, as our staff cannot remain later.

Please keep in mind; to maintain our student-to-staff ratios in these Extended Day programs, we cannot always accommodate unexpected students.

### Studios

Optional after school Studios will be offered for Children's House and Elementary students. These enrichment courses may include dance, gymnastics, martial arts, chess, art, piano, guitar, and voice lessons, and are available through special arrangements with outside instructors.

Most studios are scheduled from 2:30 PM for students in the Children's House and from 3:00 PM for students in Elementary. Students attending after school Studios need to be picked up promptly. Any student who has not been picked up will be sent to the Extended Day program. There will be a charge for this occasional use.

### School of the Arts

Students will have the opportunity to participate in the Arts, including drama and Chorus. This program allows creative enrichment in dance, theatre, music and visual art. All students are encouraged to explore the arts, develop individual talents, become leaders and contribute to society.

## **PROCEDURES**

### Hours

Beginners and Children's House classes are from 8:30 AM until 2:30 PM daily. We also offer a half-day program from 8:30 AM until 11:30 AM. Elementary classes are from 8:30 AM until 3:00 PM. All students are due in class by 8:30 AM.

### Arrival

Arrival takes place between 8:05 and 8:25 AM, during which time parking is for student drop-off only. School staff will greet you and direct all vehicles in our driveway. If you have business with the school, please return after 9:00 AM.

Only students enrolled in the Sunrise Club may arrive at school before 8:05 AM. Any student

not enrolled in the Sunrise Club may "drop-in" on an occasional basis. We ask that you call ahead so we can maintain proper staffing. There is a \$15 per use fee for this service.

### Dismissal

Students in the Toddler and Children's House classes are dismissed at 2:30 PM. Elementary students are dismissed at 3:00 PM. Parents should be on campus at dismissal time to pick up their children. Parents who are late picking up their children will be charged the \$20 hourly fee for the Sunset Club. Any student not enrolled in the Sunset club who remains on campus after the end of a Studio will be taken to the Sunset Club, and the \$20 per hour fee will apply. Children enrolled for the half-day session must be picked up by 11:45 AM. Parents who arrive late may pick up their child in the office. It is important to arrive promptly. When parents are late it worries the children. We will only dismiss children to their parents or to those persons whom their parents have authorized in writing.

### Parking

Vehicles entering and leaving the school driveway should proceed around the drive in a clockwise direction, entering at the center of our complex and exiting on the West End. The driveway can accommodate one-way traffic.

Parking is allowed only in the spaces directly in front of our school. For safety reasons, always keep your children by your side. Never allow them to run ahead of you in the parking lot.

### Attendance

All Rancho Viejo students, even our youngest, are expected to attend school daily, arriving before the start of the school day. Please phone the school by 8 AM if illness requires your child to stay home.

Consistent attendance and prompt arrival are essential, and we depend on your family's full support in this area. Consistency and routine are

important to every child's development, but they are especially important for Children's House and Toddler House students.

### Tardiness

Late arrival is disruptive and inconsiderate to the rest of the class, and nothing can be more disruptive to a child's education than irregular attendance.

If a child is tardy more than three times in a quarter or consistently misses school, the Director will meet with the parents to work out a solution.

## **EVERYDAY LIFE**

### First days

We want to ensure a happy and successful school experience for your child. Sometimes children or parents may suffer separation anxiety on the first day of school. We have found that a short and positive good-bye is easiest for the child.

Please do not stay with your child in the classroom. A prolonged good-bye often makes the separation more difficult. Feel free to call the school for reassurance that your child has settled in and is adjusting well.

### Uniform Policy

Students in our Children's House and Elementary classes are expected to be well groomed at all times and to dress in our school uniform. All clothing should fit naturally. Clothing may not be oversized, baggy, torn, excessively tight or too short.

Our dress code is designed so students will have a successful learning environment. We want the focus to be on your child's work and not on distracting or bizarre clothing or hair. Please purchase your school uniforms through True Grits Uniform Company or Land's End Uniforms.

Shoes

For safety,

shoes must be closed at the toe and heel with a rubber sole, such as tennis shoes or Mary Jane's. Please no sandals, boots, platforms, heels, light up shoes or other extreme footwear.

Socks/Stockings	May be any solid color.
Pants/Shorts	Tan, Khaki, or Navy pants or shorts.
Uniform	Tan, Khaki, Navy or School Plaid.
Skirts/Skortts	Tan, Khaki, Navy or School Plaid.
Jumpers	Tan, Khaki, Navy or School Plaid.
Shirts	Polo Shirts, Oxford Shirts, Blouses or Turtlenecks. May be any solid color with School Logo.
Sweaters	May be any solid color.
Jackets	May be any solid color (no slogans, advertising, teams).
Sweatshirts	May be any solid color (no slogans, advertising, teams or action figures).
Hats	Hats or hoods may not be worn inside the building.
Hair	Hair will be kept neat and clean. Distracting hair-styles are not appropriate and are not permitted.
Accessories	Girls may wear one pair of matching earrings. Please no excessive jewelry including dangling earrings and bangle bracelets.
Grooming	Boys may not wear earrings at school. Tattoos and body piercings may not be worn. Only light and natural nail polish or make-up may be worn.

**Backpacks** Please, no backpacks.

Any student arriving at school inappropriately dressed will be asked to go home to change and will receive a tardy or absence for that day.

Students in our Toddler House should wear sturdy play clothes. We encourage you to purchase clothing your child can easily manipulate to help foster independence. Please use pants or shorts with an elastic waist. No "onesies", overalls, or belts. And because they are toddlers, their clothes will get messy, muddy, or wet. (That's half the fun!)

What students need at school

- An insulated plastic lunch box for children not participating in our hot lunch program. Include a reusable freezer block to keep perishables fresh. We cannot refrigerate, warm-up or cook items sent from home.
- Toys should not be brought to school. They are most often lost, fought over, or broken.
- An extra set of clothing for students in our Children's House, Toddler House, and Infant House.
- One package of baby wipes each month for students in the Children's House and one package each week for the children in Toddler House and Infant House.
- Elementary students work with a variety of school supplies, which parents will need to purchase before school. The teachers will contact each family with a detailed list. These supplies will need to be replenished during the course of the year.
- There will be costs for optional activities not covered in tuition, such as school pictures, special extracurricular activities, etc.

Textbooks

The Montessori curriculum is based on research, rather than the conventional dependence on textbooks as the primary focus of learning. Much of our student's work in school involves the

use of hands-on Montessori materials that remain in the classroom or readings in a wide range of books from the school and public libraries. Some subjects do involve the use of texts that will remain with the children throughout the year. Naturally, it is essential that the children respect and take care of their books. Students are responsible for lost or damaged school or library books.

### Plants

Taking care of one's own plant is an important part of the daily routine for Children's House and Elementary students. Each child brings a plant from home to keep in the classroom. We suggest a hearty, nonpoisonous variety of about 4" in size.

### Lost and found

Parents are advised to clearly mark and label all their child's belongings including sweaters, jackets, extra clothing, educational items or books brought to share. Each child must keep track of his or her own belongings. Remember to take sweaters, jackets, PE clothing, and lunch boxes home daily. Items forgotten by students are kept in a lost and found bin for two weeks. Articles left unclaimed for more than two weeks will be donated to charity.

### Rest time

Students in our Toddler House class and first- and second-year students in our Children's House classes have a rest/nap time each day. For your convenience, we provide and launder bedding. Third year, or Kindergarten aged, students may be invited to gather in a separate class during naptime for additional Montessori work time.

### Special items

Children are welcome to bring books, science specimens and other items of educational interest to class. Toys must be left at home. If your child brings something valuable to school, please inform the teacher so we can ensure the item goes home.

After a school day, you may discover puzzle pieces, tiny cubes, beads or other items in your child's cuff or pockets. These small items are part of the Montessori educational materials we use in class. Please return them to the school right away.

### Celebrations

All classes emphasize celebrations during the year; however, each class may add its own special touch on each celebration. Some of the annual traditions we celebrate include:

- Cultural Festivals: Our international studies.
- Harvest Party: Normally held in late October, students may dress in costumes.
- Thanksgiving: A time for reflection, giving thanks, and community service. Classes will prepare a Thanksgiving luncheon to enjoy with one another. Stories of Thanksgiving will be retold and often dramatized.
- Hanukkah and Christmas: The stories of these two holidays are retold, with rich cultural and artistic projects and activities.
- Valentine's Day: The children share valentines and explore the themes of love, family, and friendship.
- President's Day: We celebrate American history through the lives of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington.
- Passover and Easter: The stories of these two holidays are retold, with rich cultural and artistic projects and activities. Classes will celebrate freedom, peace, and the fellowship of the human family.
- Earth Day: Celebrating the coming of spring and the importance of stewardship for the Earth, the students become involved in meaningful environmental studies and projects.
- Variety Shows, Concerts, and Musical Theatre.
- Parents are invited to share other cultural celebrations with the class.

### Birthdays

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their friends. In the Children's House, we have a special birthday ceremony in which we tell the class the story of the birthday child's life. Please send in a photograph of your child at each year of his life. Please do not send treats. We invite you to send a cake or muffin mix instead. In this way your child can prepare a treat to serve his or her friends.

### Lunch

Rancho Viejo School offers a hot lunch program. Parents may opt to bring in a sack lunch from home, however, we cannot warm-up or cook the food you send. When packing your child's lunch, remember to send a nutritious, balanced lunch that is fresh and natural. For younger children, please prepare food in small, easy-to-handle servings. You may send milk, however, please do not send sodas or fruit juices.

We emphasize the importance of good nutrition and count on you to work with us to teach your child about health and nutrition. Sugary foods and drinks, soda, candy and gum are not allowed.

### Snacks

Children's House and Toddler House students may bring nutritional snacks for the mornings and afternoons. We have many food preparation lessons that include fruit, veggies, cheese, etc. At snack, we will serve milk or water. Elementary children may pack a healthy snack to eat at their leisure during the morning. We ask that all children eat breakfast before arriving at school.

### Helper of the Day

The students in the Children's House program will take turns being Helper of the Day. Privileges include line leader, flag bearer, calendar helper, and show and tell. Children enjoy bringing in an item from nature, a special souvenir from a trip, something they have made, or their favorite books to share. Do not send toys. The Helper of the Day also brings morning

snacks for his classmates. Snacks should be prepared for 24 students.

### Outdoors policy

The outdoors is an important part of the prepared environment and children will go outside every day. Outdoor activities may include gardening, playing, physical exercise and dining. Any child who is too ill to go outside must remain at home.

### Field Trips

Classes will periodically take field trips to local points of interest during the year, which may involve a small fee. Field Trips are planned to coordinate with subjects being studied by a class or take advantage of special community events. Notice of upcoming events will be sent home in advance. Parents are invited to participate as chaperones in these activities. Children's House parents will always be notified of any trips scheduled for your child's class. Transportation will be by professional bus service.

Elementary field trips within a 20-mile radius of the school will be covered by a single permission slip signed at the beginning of the school year. We will attempt to notify you in advance of these trips. We will often use the school vehicles for these short trips. Longer trips will always be preceded by notification and will require a separate permission slip. Elementary classes will typically have one or more overnight trips during the year. These trips will be carefully planned and chaperoned.

## **STUDENT HEALTH**

### When your child is ill

Whenever your child is ill and will not be coming to school, please call the office between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. to let us know that she will be absent, so we don't worry. Students with infectious diseases, such as chicken pox or strep throat, must stay out of school until the contagious stage has passed. For the sake of



the other children's health, it is vital that you let the office know your child's doctor's diagnosis as soon as possible.

In the case of a common cold, the student should remain at home if fever is present, or if there is a sore throat, eye infection, or severe nasal excretions. Students with symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, or undiagnosed skin rash should remain at home also. Students will go outside to play every day. If you feel that your child may be too sick to go out and play, he is probably too ill to be at school.

#### When your child becomes ill at school

If your child feels ill, we will take him or her to the office. After a brief stay, if the child feels too ill to return to class, we will contact you to arrange for the child to be picked up right away. We understand how difficult it can be for working parents to break free during the day, yet all our children get ill from time to time. You may want to make arrangements with a friend or relative in advance. Because colds, flu, and other childhood illnesses spread from child to child with alarming speed, please do not send your child to school if he or she has a fever, nausea, or any other symptoms of illness.

#### Injuries

Our faculty and staff are trained in first aid and CPR. Minor injuries are treated with soap, water, bandages and ice. We record such injuries in Ouch Reports. Please sign the Ouch Report and return it to the office. Parents will be called immediately if we observe a head injury or in the event of any serious or questionable injury.

In an emergency, we will call 911 and contact you. Please be sure to keep your emergency information form up to date. We must be able to reach you at any time during the school day.

#### Medication

Except in extraordinary situations, we prefer not to administer medication at school. Please

do not send any medication with your child, including aspirin or other over-the-counter drugs, except under a doctor's instructions as explained below. Antibiotics and other medications should be scheduled so doses are due during hours when the child is home. When a child is so ill as to require frequent medication, they should not be in school.

Our staff members are prohibited from providing or administering any medication, including aspirin, to any student except as authorized by you as a parent and the child's physician. When, in the opinion of your child's physician, it is necessary for medication to be administered during school hours, a school staff member will give it to your child in accordance with the following procedures:

- Any medication brought to school must be left with the staff in the school office, where it will be locked up.
- The "Authorization to Administer Medication" and the Physician's prescription must accompany all medications before the first day medication is administered at the school. Any medication sent without the appropriate completed authorization form will not be administered and will be sent home.
- If a medication is to be administered on an on-going basis, the Authorization to Administer Medication should indicate the duration of treatment.
- In cases involving long-term medication for chronic conditions, a new authorization form must be filed with the school each year in September. A new medication form must accompany any medication changes during the school year.
- We can only administer oral medications.
- Medication will not be kept at school overnight.
- The original bottle containing the medication must be clearly labeled with the student's name, medication contained, and the time(s)

and amount(s) of dosage. (When having the prescription filled, you may request two bottles.)

- A new authorization form must be completed for each episode of illness and each new medication.
- As a parent, you are responsible for administering the first day's dosage of any new medication at home.
- As a parent, you are responsible for notifying the school in person or by telephone on the first morning a new medication is being brought in with the completed authorization form and physician's statement.
- Whenever possible, medication schedules should be arranged to cause minimal interruption in the student's school day.
- A copy of the form authorizing us to dispense medication may be obtained from the school office.
- We will strictly adhere to this policy.
- This policy applies to prescription and over-the-counter medications.

## **PARENTS & THE SCHOOL**

### A community built on trust, friendship and respect

Once upon a time we all lived in a "Community." Children were born, grew up, got jobs, married, and raised their own children in the same town. They attended the same schools that their mothers and fathers attended as children. Perhaps they even had some of the same teachers that their parents had as children.

And, for the most part, kids grew up to be decent, honest members of society. Truthfully, they had little or no choice. Anytime they strayed off the straight and narrow path, there was always someone who knew them and their family who would set them straight. Some people might consider this "meddling", but in many ways that "meddling" was a demonstration of "caring".

In our fast-paced and very mobile society, it's difficult to establish community bonds that unite people. Today many of us wish that we could re-create that same type of environment. Once we developed a sense of community simply because we lived together in the same town or neighborhood. Today, we may only know a handful of our neighbors. Our friends, and, more importantly, our children's friends, move out of one neighborhood to another, or even out of town as our careers dictate. Those of us who cherish the old sense of close-knit community must create our own by joining together with people with whom we share similar interests, concerns, and values.

You will often hear the word 'community' used to describe Rancho Viejo. Relationships tend to grow strong, and friendship runs deep here. Teachers, students, and parents enjoy an old-fashioned sense of friendship and collaboration. This opportunity for continuity, stability, and a true sense of community within the school means a great deal to many of us at Rancho Viejo. Students know that they belong, that they are respected, and that they are cared for not only by their parents, but by the larger community of fellow students, teachers, and other parents in the school, many of whom have known them almost all their lives.

Rancho Viejo brings together families who have chosen to identify with a common commitment to the shared concerns, values, and expectations they have for their children. We come from different backgrounds, but our sense of community exists in spite of, or perhaps because of it. Rancho Viejo teaches our children to understand and appreciate cultural differences and shared human values: peace, independence, human dignity, and a celebration of life.

### Volunteering the gift of time and talent

Parents play a crucial role at Rancho Viejo. This is a community of parents and educators (many of whom are parents here, too). Together our

ideas and input literally help to shape the school. Few schools are so open and responsive to suggestions and concerns. Rancho Viejo strongly encourages families to feel at home and to participate in the broader life of the school through social and educational activities offered by various organizations of the school. Although most parents spend considerable amounts of time as volunteers at Rancho Viejo, there is no expectation for a set time commitment.

There are some things that even money can't buy, and one of the most valuable contributions that families make to Rancho Viejo is the gift of their time and expertise. Parents, grandparents, and friends of the school are often found assisting in the classrooms, helping in the office, offering a Studio, serving as field trip chaperones, planning the next special event, coaching, or serving on parents' associations or school committees.

Parents and grandparents who give of their time and talent share in their family's special memories of experiences and friendships that endure well beyond their children's graduation. Rancho Viejo depends on our combined talents.

The following are a few ways in which you can help at Rancho Viejo:

- Volunteer a few hours a week to help in the office
- Lend your time to our fundraising efforts
- Help keep the library organized
- Serve on one of the school's committees
- Volunteer to be an Ambassador Family to parents new to the school.
- Contribute an article to the school newsletter
- Help organize special events
- Help organize field trips or special lessons
- Volunteer your time to help the school prepare major mailings
- Help our students work in the Garden
- Share your talents and special interests, such as a musical instrument that you play, a

second language that you speak, a craft that you enjoy, or a field that you have studied

- Volunteer your time to coach a team or after school club
- Serve as a class parent

#### Rancho Viejo Parent Association

All parents are invited to participate in the RVPA, which meets at 5:00 PM on the second Wednesday of the month. Childcare is provided.

#### Communication between home and school

The quality of Rancho Viejo is maintained through communicating with our families. The school will regularly email or send home memos, letters, calendars, flyers, and announcements of upcoming special events. You have a family folder in the front office that you should check regularly. You may use these folders for notes or invitations to other families. Additionally, the school has a web site and Facebook page to keep parents up to date.

Because teachers are unable to take telephone calls during class, we will gladly take telephone messages and e-mail messages for them. You may also leave notes for teachers or staff members at the front office.

#### Faculty meetings & staff development

Rancho Viejo School is built on successful staff development using Montessori enrichment sources. Our staff is encouraged to attend conferences, in-services, workshops and continuing education classes during the year.

A well-prepared, highly qualified staff also requires time for planning and organizing. To ensure a teaching staff of the highest caliber, we conduct regular faculty meetings. As a courtesy to our parents, the Sunrise/Sunset Club will remain open during these meeting times.

### **ACADEMIC POLICIES**

#### Portfolios

Even though young children tend to be much

more interested in the process of work than in tangible products, even four- and five-year-olds tend to produce enough to create an impressive collection as the months go by. Remember to check your child's cubby regularly for math work, language activities, drawings, and other papers your child chooses to bring home.

As an end of year activity, you may wish to help your child assemble his best work from the year into a permanent portfolio binder. You may want to add photographs that you've taken of your child and his friends and teachers over the year, some poetry, and a little note to your child reminding him of the high points of the year.

### Homework

Homework is designed to reinforce the concepts of carrying work to and from school, following directions, setting up workspace, planning time and observing due dates. This is a learning process for your child. Research supports the notion that the goal of homework through the elementary years is to reinforce patterns for future years. Homework focused on acquisition of knowledge becomes more frequent in the later Junior and High School years.

You can best support your student by providing a means for carrying work to and from school and establishing time and space in the evening to plan and accomplish assignments. Modeling behavior by turning off the television and reading or working quietly in proximity to your child will be most helpful.

While asking questions and helping your child to formulate questions can help build your student's confidence, doing their work for them does not. Moreover, there is a certain degree of self-discipline that can be developed within the growing child through the process of completing assignments independently. The process of learning to do work at home takes time and patience for all.

Rancho Viejo begins to assign homework in our Elementary classes, not page after page of busy-work, but meaningful, interesting assignments that expand on the topics that the children are pursuing in class. Homework does not need to be boring! We challenge children to think, explore, and pursue tangible projects that give them a sense of satisfaction. Students may also practice and reinforce skills introduced in the classroom.

Depending on the child's level, assignments typically involve reading, spelling, research, writing, or something to accomplish. They may include things to be experienced, such as reading a book, visiting the museum, or going to see a play. They may include things to learn, such as "See if you can learn how to solve these problems well enough that you can teach the skill to a younger student." They may include projects to be submitted, such as an experiment, a play, essay, story, or model.

When possible, the teachers build opportunities for children to choose among several alternative assignments. Sometimes teachers will prepare individually negotiated weekly assignments with a student.

### Academic Honesty

A cornerstone of Montessori philosophy is respect: respect for self, respect for others, and respect for the environment. Because this is an educational environment, intellectual honesty is a quality that we hold dear. As a community, trust is earned through caring and working together.

In preparing the whole child for the whole world, we work with students' academic and social needs. It is our expectation as a teaching community that through our modeling and community efforts the students understand the importance of respect and integrity.

Should it become apparent that a student is not clear about the importance of these qualities, we

will discuss with the student the value of trust, respect, and intellectual honesty. We will then allow the student time to reflect on the discussion and make a presentation to their teachers and family concerning community responsibility and intellectual honesty.

### Academic Testing

In a Montessori environment it is important for a student's teacher to observe and measure the child's work and growth. Students demonstrate their skills as individuals during the third part of each lesson they are given. The Montessori three-part lesson is as follows:

- Part one: Lesson Introduction
- Part two: Lesson Practice
- Part three: Demonstration of Mastery

The Montessori curriculum is carefully structured and sequenced, and the teachers maintain careful records of each student's academic progress.

Elementary students will also take tests and quizzes on the concepts and skills that they have been studying. We use them as a feedback loop, at times indicating that a student needs a new lesson or more practice. After working with individual children and carefully observing their work, Montessori teachers know far more about the students' progress than can be revealed on any paper and pencil test.

Although standardized tests are frequently inaccurate, misleading, and stressful for children, we conduct annual standardized testing as an exercise of Practical Life. Students learn to take tests and be confident of their preparedness for the process. Testing using the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills begins at the first-year Elementary level. Tests for all students will be scored to obtain raw scores and percentile rankings and presented in a report, which can be discussed with parents. However, we do not place much emphasis on these tests as a measure

of an individual student's progress.

### Family conferences

Because Montessori Schools do not compare students against an arbitrary standard or the performance of their classmates, we do not rely on familiar letter grades. We send home written narrative reports twice a year to review the children's development and discuss how the Montessori program is contributing to their growth.

For students in the Children's House, we will schedule two family conferences during the year, in January and June. Progress Reports for Elementary students will also be issued in January and June. Conferences for Elementary students will be held after the 1st and 3rd quarters. Additional conferences will be scheduled upon request.

It is important for teachers and parents to establish and maintain close communication. Please feel free to ask questions or discuss anything related to your child's progress. We ask, however, that you understand that the teacher's responsibility during school is to the students. Morning arrival is a very sensitive period when the teachers greet each student and set a calm, pleasant tone for the day. Interruptions need to be kept to a minimum. If you must speak with a teacher, you can e-mail or correspond via a note and the teachers will get back to you by phone or will send a note to set up a conference as needed. We also hold several parent information evenings throughout the year.

### Promotion from one level to the next

Students at Rancho Viejo do not follow a preset curriculum for each grade level. They proceed at their own pace. As a result, the concept that a child is a first, second, or sixth grader does not have the same meaning as it would in a conventional "grade" school. As a college preparatory school, Rancho Viejo has established

expectations for the normal baseline achievement that we expect to see in our students. While these expectations may surpass those standards, they represent a normal index of knowledge and skills that we expect most Montessori students to display.

Advancement to the next class level (i.e.: from the Lower to the Upper Elementary) is based on an evaluation of the child's total academic, social, emotional, and physical and motor development. Because our classes can individually tailor the child's academic program to a large degree, regardless into which group he or she is placed, the most important criteria for advancement to an older group is often the student's social adjustment, independence, work habits, and maturity. We always invite parents to work with us in reaching these decisions and focus on what will be in the child's best interests.

#### Transcripts

By written request, the parent may ask that a copy of the student's file, along with completed recommendation forms, be issued to another school. Report cards and transcripts cannot be issued if a student has an outstanding balance on his or her account. They will be forwarded once the account has been brought up to date.

#### Privacy of student files

Student files are confidential records and are kept secure from unauthorized access. Parents may have access to the child's file by written request at least 24 hours in advance. The file must be viewed in the presence of a Rancho Viejo staff member, and if they disagree with any item in the file, a note may be inserted into the permanent file with their comments.

Officials of the Health Department, Department of Social Services and Department of Education may have the right to review student files without the parents' permission. However, with a written court order, other government officials may inspect the contents of a student's file

without the permission of the student or parent, and the school will inform the student and his family in writing that such an inspection has been requested or made.

A copy of the student's file may be sent to an outside professional, such as a psychologist or educational diagnostician, if requested in writing by the parent or guardian with notation of pertinent papers to be sent.

### **GROUND RULES**

#### Fundamental ground rules

As a school founded on the Montessori ideals, we assume that every person deserves respect. Rancho Viejo expects students to demonstrate kindness, courtesy, and respect toward the school and fellow students, parents, teachers, and staff. The goal of all Montessori education is to establish safe, warm, caring environments within which we teach students positive and appropriate ways to handle situations. Rather than assume misbehavior and punishment are inevitable, students develop a strong sense of self-discipline, responsibility and courtesy.

When a student at Rancho Viejo finds it difficult to follow the school's expectations about personal conduct, we will quickly bring the student, family, and staff together to work toward a solution. We follow an approach based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Neither corporal punishment, nor physical or emotional intimidation is allowed at Rancho Viejo.

If anyone consciously or flagrantly violates the social contract regarding safety, kindness, and courtesy, our response is to identify the appropriate and natural consequences of their actions. For example, if something is broken, it must be replaced or repaired, preferably not by the parents alone, but by the student whose actions led to the damage.

Any student who repeatedly breaks the ground rules, or who on even one occasion endangers the

health and safety of others, may be asked to leave the school by the Head of School.

We have worked together to create a system of ground rules and discipline that is firm, fair, and consistent to help students maintain the school's values and character. All students are expected to adhere to and respect them to protect one another. Our ground rules are essentially the same at every level of the school, although the language and emphasis changes somewhat for the older student. This is how we explain them to younger students. Please review these rules with your child:

- Be kind and gentle to one another.
- Everyone here has a right to concentration and privacy. Please do not disturb anyone who is trying to concentrate on his or her work.
- Everyone here has a right to his or her personal belongings. Please do not touch anything that is not yours without the owner's permission. If you accidentally lose or break something, please replace it without a fuss.
- Everyone here has the right to feel safe and secure. Please do not express anger or upset feelings in a way that insults or threatens someone else.
- Everyone here has the right to be physically safe. Please do not do anything that might hurt or endanger anyone.
- No one here is allowed to fight, push, trip, or use any other aggressive behavior.
- Use the playground equipment as intended.
- Do not climb trees, planters, or fences.
- Let everyone who wants to play join your games.
- Stop chasing or playing scary games when asked.
- Please do not tackle or trip one another in any games.
- Keep sand and sand toys in the sandbox.
- Do not throw sand or mulch.
- Do not leave your teacher's supervision without permission.
- Do not enter the parking lot or ever leave campus without an adult.
- Please do not roughhouse or play carelessly.
- Play ball games in the designated play areas.
- Keep sticks and stones on the ground. Do not pick them up and never throw them.
- Please put all balls, ropes, and other outdoor equipment away when you are finished playing with them.

#### Ground rules for elementary students

- **Respect one another:** We expect everyone at Rancho Viejo to treat everyone else in the school community—faculty, staff, students, and parents—with kindness and respect both in words and actions.
- **Respect authority:** We expect students to comply with teacher's directions. We further expect students to seek appropriate methods of appeal should they ever believe it to be necessary.
- **Attendance:** Students must attend each class daily (from beginning to end). They may not skip school, nor skip any class. "Excused" absences will be verified with the family.
- **Tardiness:** You must arrange to arrive at school promptly every day.
- **Dress Code:** We expect students to dress appropriately, and in good taste, within the dress code guidelines. On field trips and special events, please wear one of the Rancho Viejo shirts.
- **Skateboards and Roller Blades:** Skateboards and roller blades are not allowed.
- **Detention:** Under certain circumstances, students may have to spend their lunch, recess, or Studio periods in house detention. Often this involves assisting in one of the classrooms or with maintenance around the grounds.

#### Drugs and alcohol

Although we assume that it will never happen, as the school begins to extend through the higher levels, it seems important to be clear about our

position.

We expect our students to avoid all contact with drugs or alcohol. This is defined to include the use, possession, or sale of any controlled substance (drug) or alcoholic beverage. The possession or sale of any alcohol or controlled substance, either during the school day or during any school-sponsored trip, party, or function, may be immediate grounds for expulsion.

#### Violence and harassment

Rancho Viejo cannot tolerate any irresponsible and dangerous behavior, acts of violence, threats of violence, emotional or sexual harassment or written or verbal abuse directed toward anyone. It is illegal and absolutely forbidden to bring or carry a weapon to school or to use any common object as a weapon.

#### Smoking

Rancho Viejo is a smoke-free environment. No one may smoke on campus or at any school-sponsored trip, party, or other activity. Rancho Viejo will do everything in its power to discourage students from ever starting. We are equally committed to protecting the rights of non-smokers and offering support and help to any smokers ready to quit.

#### Cell phones

Please do not use your cell phone while inside the school buildings. Give your child your undivided attention during the transition of pick-up and drop-off.

#### Respect for the property of others

Any theft, vandalism, or damage to property, whether deliberate or accidental, must be repaired or repaid.

#### Care of the environment

The entire school community (teachers, students, and administrators) is responsible for helping to maintain the order and neatness of the school environment.

- Everyone is expected to help maintain the

cleanliness and order of the school.

- If something spills, please clean it up right away.
- Everyone is expected to help keep the school litter free by picking up any trash or belongings that you find strewn around. Do not throw trash on the ground, indoors or out.
- Students may not eat or drink while walking.
- Students are expected to help with the daily clean-up in their class areas.

#### Rules for vehicle safety

All the normal school rules apply when in the school vehicle. In addition, please be sure you understand and can support the following basic safety rules. Safety is our prime concern, and we must insist that every student follow certain rules of safe and courteous conduct while riding in our school vehicles.

- Always wear your seat belt.
- Always stay in your seat while the vehicle is moving.
- Do not leave your seat to get off until the vehicle has come to a complete stop.
- For everyone's safety, do not shout, engage in horseplay, or switch seats during the trip.
- Never stick your hand (or anything else) out of the vehicle window.
- Never throw anything out of the vehicle.
- Do not play with sharp objects, such as pens or pencils, in the vehicle.
- Do not eat or drink in the vehicle.
- Every student is expected to set a good example for the younger children. Watch your language and behavior. Do not curse, act foolish, or break any school rules.

#### Disaster preparedness

We hold fire drills regularly to acquaint children with evacuation procedures. These drills and practices are done so children will know what to do in case of an actual emergency.

- When the bell rings, all classes will dismiss into designated areas and remain in their



groups.

- The teachers will make certain the room is empty and close the doors.
- The teachers will join the class outside the building, take roll, and notify the office of attendance.
- Students are expected to remain grouped in the designated area until informed that they may return to class.

Rancho Viejo School is equipped with a fire alarm system that includes horns and strobes. Fire extinguishers are located throughout the building.

We also hold random earthquake drills where children are taught to drop and cover.

The Rancho Viejo School is stocked with emergency supplies. We will supervise children at our school until parents arrive for up to 72 hours following a major disaster. After this time, we will take the children to the central disaster site at Arroyo Vista Elementary School or RSM Intermediate School, where additional assistance and counseling will be available. We ask parents to provide an out-of-state contact person on the emergency form.

## **FINANCIAL POLICIES**

### Tuition policies

Rancho Viejo is an independent school completely dependent on tuition as its source of income. Student accounts must be kept up to date. The school must withhold services to students whose accounts have fallen behind unless arrangements have been made for deferred payment. Annual tuition will be prorated monthly for those students withdrawing during the school year. If a student attends any day of a month, you will be responsible for the entire month of tuition.

### Re-enrollment

Invitations to continue at Rancho Viejo are normally automatic but are not guaranteed. Decisions are made by the administration and

faculty, based on an annual review of each student's academic progress, social and emotional development, any special needs (if applicable), along with the attitudes and values expressed by the child and parents. Our goal is to help each child and family find the perfect match between the student, home, and school.

A re-enrollment application will be sent home in April and is due back at the school by May 15<sup>th</sup>. If the school has not received a student's reenrollment application by May 15<sup>th</sup>, the space will be made available to new students who have applied for admission to the school. No student may reenroll if there is an outstanding balance.

### Tuition Assistance

Rancho Viejo Montessori School offers substantial financial assistance to families of multiple children enrolled in the school, on an as needed basis. We offer a 5% discount to families with two students enrolled and a 10% discount to families with three or more students enrolled.

### Fundraisers

Rancho Viejo Montessori has begun to look beyond tuition income to voluntary contributions from families and friends of the school who want to invest in the school's development and assist other families with financial needs are welcome.

We also offer several fundraising opportunities throughout the year and families are invited to participate in some or all of them.